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CHINESE TURKESTAN

BY
MAJOR C. D. BRUCE



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GENERAL SIR THOMAS HOLDICH was in the chair, and in opening the proceedings said: In the absence of your chairman, General Sir Edwin Collen, who has written to say how extremely sorry he is not to be able to be present, I have the pleasant duty of introducing Major Bruce to you. Not very long since Major Bruce described his most interesting journey across China and Turkestan to the members of the Royal Geographical Society, and some of us may be familiar with his story from the geographical point of view. But that story is still so full and interesting from so many other points of view, that we cannot fail to derive further profit from what Major Bruce has to tell us to-day.

One of the chief characteristics of those who live in this strenuous century is a distinct impatience with the older nations of the world in that they are not more modern. Whether we are watching the adoption of any up-to-date constitution, as in Persia, by a nation whose political organization has hardly changed in the course of some 2,000 years, or the final disruption of a corrupt and worthless bureaucracy, as in Russia, the uppermost thought in the mind of most onlookers is that the change does not come as rapidly as they would desire. In the present day not many of these ancient and interesting countries have been left to be studied, but among them, itself a dependency of the hoariest among nations, is Chinese Turkestan. It is of its present and past condition that I propose to speak this afternoon, in hope that the long and close connexion Chinese Turkestan once bore to India may cause some interest to be extended

to a country in which singularly little has up to the last few years been taken.

Invariably known to the Chinese as the Hsing Chiang, or new frontier, the name given to this area on European maps is a somewhat vague one. For present purposes the general boundaries of Chinese Turkestan may be defined thus :

On the south it is bordered by an almost impassable wall formed by the Kuen Lun mountains ; on the north by the Tian Shan mountains and their eastern offshoots ; on the west by the Alai mountains, the Kizil Art, and the great Pamirs. On the east no natural boundary exists, but an artificial one is found in the main north-west road leading from Peking to Kashgar, which here crosses the desert at its narrowest point from An-Si-Chou to Hami.

More interesting than the geographical boundaries are the political areas which surround Chinese Turkestan. Throughout the greater part of its length the frontier of Northern China marches with that of Russia. From the Tugdambash Pamir for some 3,000 miles north and east Chinese territory is coterminous with that of its ever-expanding neighbour. In the south-west corner lies one of the most debatable lands in Asia, what is commonly called the roof of the world, where three Empires meet. To the south lie Kashmir—otherwise British India—and Tibet, whose suzerain is China. On its eastern side Chinese Turkestan is physically open all round, but actually the only approach to it is through a thin strip of semi-cultivated territory in North-West Kansu.

One of the main points to be studied in examining the future of any country, whether from the commercial, military, or administrative point of view, is that of its communications. The subject of roads cannot but lead to that of influence and privilege. The area under dis-

cussion is traversed by three main routes—two of major and one of minor importance. All three start from An-Si-Chou, on the Kansu border, and run west to the Russian frontier. As far as Hami the two northern tracks have together formed the great north-west road from Peking. At Hami, which town stands ten stages distance across the desert from An-si-Chou, they bifurcate. After dividing, the northern branch is known as the Tian Shan Pei Lu, or north road. This runs from Hami viâ Urumtsi, the capital of Chinese Turkestan, to Kuldja, close to the Russian frontier. Urumtsi is always known to the Chinese as Hoong Miao Tzu, or the red temple, from the fact that there is a notable temple there.

Kuldja was well known in Europe at the time of the Yakob Beg rising, being then occupied, as was the whole of Ili, by Russian troops. On account of its geographical situation it may not improbably be heard of again, though whether as once more containing a Russian garrison, or as one of the new defensive outposts of a regenerated China, time alone will show.

The other branch of the two main routes is called the Tian Shan Nan Lu, or south road. This runs west from Hami along the northern border of the central desert to Kashgar, passing through towns and oases of varying importance, the chief of which are Karasha, Aksu, and Maral Bashi.

The third and little used of the main routes, after quitting An-Si-Chou, runs south of the Takla-Makan desert along the lower spurs of the Kuen Lun main range, at a height of between 4,000 and 8,000 feet above the sea-level. This track also divides into two at Cherchen, a well-to-do oasis 200 miles west of Lopnor. From Cherchen one branch runs direct through the desert to Kiria, and the other to the same town, but along the

northern base of the Kuen Lun. After uniting at Kiria, these two tracks lead on as one to Yarkand, Kashgar, and the Russian frontier.

So much for the lateral communications which traverse the Hsin Chiang, but we must not omit to notice that these three routes are also connected across the desert from north to south by lesser tracks. The most important of these is a caravan track between Urumtsi and Chakalik, which runs viâ Karasha and Korla down the Tarim River past Lop Nor. The second cross communication is maintained between Khotan and Ak-Su, where a track follows the Khotan River in about twenty-three marches to the latter place.

Having dealt with the interior routes traversing Chinese Turkestan, a few words may be said of some of the most important roads which lead out or into that country.

1. The first, though perhaps the least important, except to us as a nation, is that from India viâ Leh and the Karakoram Pass, by which most of the communication and all such trade as there is passes to India. An alternative route to this, but one seldom used, is that viâ Gilgit, Hunza, and Tashkurgen.

2. The second is the main road connecting Eastern, or Chinese, with Western, or Russian Turkestan, which from Kashgar follows the Kizil-Su over the Terek Pass across the frontier to Osh.

3. The third is a caravan route from Ak-Su up the river of the same name over the Tian Shan mountains, thence across the Russian frontier viâ Issikol to join the present post-road and future railway line at Pish Pek.

4. The fourth is a continuation west of the Tian Shan north road, which leads up the Ili River over the Russian frontier on to the post-road between Vernoe and Kopal.

It may be of interest to state that in the course of a journey through Central Asia made in 1902 I passed through Pish Pek and Vernoe. The country surrounding the latter place is as rich an agricultural district as could be desired. No finer country for colonization exists than some that will be traversed by the new Tash Kent-Omsk railway. Why, then, do we hear of new and extended schemes for settling such inhospitable and far-away regions as East Siberia or the Amur country?

5. The fifth of the exterior main routes leading into Chinese Turkestan is in some ways the most important, for it connects Chakalik near Lop Nor with Lhasa. From Lhasa to Chakalik the journey can be made in two months by well-mounted travellers; the usual time occupied by the many pilgrims who pour that way is three months.

Between Urumtsi, the capital of Chinese Turkestan, and Peking on the east, is a space of some 2,000 miles. Of this distance, at the present moment, not one mile is linked by rail, although it is hoped that Si-An-Fu in Shensi may soon thus be connected with Peking. The great highway connecting Chinese Turkestan with the capital is throughout most of its length a mere track, which passes over a succession of rugged passes as high, in the case of the Wu-Shi-Ling, the best known, as 10,000 feet. A road, in the European sense of the word, it is not. For hundreds of miles it is merely a track, worn throughout twenty centuries by the wheels of countless Chinese carts, untouched from year to year, unless rendered actually impassable owing to climatic disturbances; such is the only communication uniting this far dependency with Peking. To the west, Urumtsi stands within 400 miles of the Russian border, with which it is connected, as already stated, by the Tian Shan north road. Beyond this frontier the lines of

modern railway, made and in the making, which connect European Russia with Chinese Turkestan, are too well known to require to be mentioned here.

Having endeavoured to indicate briefly the present general aspect of the communications which unite Chinese Turkestan with the outside world, let us now turn to another connexion which has strong claims to your attention.

Among those who have devoted time to a study of the area under review, it is well known how intimately connected in the past Chinese Turkestan was with India. But by people less interested, this important point is not, perhaps, fully realized. It is a matter of history that it was from our great Asiatic dependency that the teaching of Buddha first entered China. It was also from the same direction that the early Græko-Buddhist art, relics of which Dr. Stein has been chiefly instrumental in disinterring, reached Chinese Turkestan: and we now also know, without any doubt, that it was from Northern India that the western end of this area was at one period colonized, and, in addition, received a language, a literature, and a script. The first reliable evidence of this latter was discovered by Colonel Bower in his well-known find of birch-bark leaves in 1890, and since that date Dr. Stein has largely increased the debt, owed to him by all students of Central Asian history and archæology, by other and even more valuable discoveries.

At what exact date intercommunication between China and India first took place is still a debatable question. Chinese records place the event about 100 years B.C., when commercial relations with Shintu, or Thian Chu, as India was first called by them, are on record.

Sir Henry Yale, however, gives reason for supposing that the Hindus knew the Chinas, as they were called in the laws of Manu, as degenerate Kahatriyes centuries before the date assigned by the Chinese themselves. Pauthier, in his edition of 'Marco Polo,' also says 'that people from India passed into Shensi, the westernmost part of China, more than 1,000 years before our era, and at that time founded a state named Tsin, the same word as our China.'

The story of the actual introduction of Buddhism into the latter country is not without interest, for Chinese Turkestan was the channel through which it flowed.

In the reign of the Emperor Ming-Ti, one of the Eastern Han dynasty, that potentate dreamed a dream. In his sleep, it is related, he imagined he saw a golden figure floating in a halo of light across the room. Unable, like Pharaoh, to conceive what meaning to place upon his dream, Ming-Ti assembled his wise men and astrologers, and from them invited suggestions as to its interpretation. Unpleasant as such a call upon their inventive faculties must have been, it is probable that the wiseacres were sufficiently in touch with the thoughts and hopes of their noble master to be able to assume with some certainty what was expected of them. They hinted in reply that the figure seen by the Emperor was probably that of Buddha, for with the new religion, it must be remembered, they were already familiar; and the result of their explanation was the despatch of a special envoy to India to investigate the truth. After a considerable period of absence the envoy returned, having obtained not only the necessary sacred books, pictures, and imigria of the new religion, but having also been fortunate enough to persuade some Indian priests to accompany them to the home of their ruler. It was after this

manner that a faith as fine as any the world has known was introduced to China, a people and country by whom, for nearly 2,000 years, it has since been neglected and debased.

After having dwelt somewhat fully upon the introduction of Buddhism into China, the question may naturally be asked, what effect this has had upon the moral well-being of the millions, who have at various periods professed its obligations. Ethically one of the purest and most elevated forms of religion the world has known it was at one time the state religion of China. That it may in its early time have answered the purpose of a moral force is probably true. That it does so now I am afraid is not the case. In the present day it retains no inward vitality, nor is it a religion any longer in the broadest meaning of that word. Impossible, even impertinent, as it may seem to attempt to judge the hidden forces which guide the conduct of an alien race, there is no room for such an imputation here. If religion means anything, it means some moral force by which men shape their daily conduct through life, one which is sufficiently strong to enable the willing spirit to overcome the weak flesh. Can it be maintained that Buddhism in China still retains this power? I fear not. Interesting as it might be to follow the gradual decay of this almost divine faith, it is altogether beyond the scope of this paper.

Let us turn to more prosaic matters while I endeavour to offer you information of a lighter and more mundane kind.

Present-day administration in Chinese Turkestan varies little from that in force in China proper, except that for the head-men of villages, so great a factor in Chinese rural organization, Begs and native heads of

tribes are substituted. Wise in their generation, the Chinese are content to supervise and control, leaving to their own chiefs the immediate supervision of the home life of village communities and that of nomad tribes. As mentioned previously, the centre of administration is at Urumtsi, where the Fu-Tai, or governor, resides.

Below the governor are three Tao-Tai intendants of circuit, who are stationed at Kashgar, Aksu, and Kuldja. Lower again in the official scale come the Ambans, answering to district magistrates. Attached to all these officials are the army of clerks, interpreters, and functionaries always considered necessary to uphold the dignity of magisterial life in China.

The above officials constitute that portion of the administration which is in the hands of Chinese. Under them again are the actual working heads in touch with the people, and these are all natives of the dominion. The most important in rank are the Begg, heads of districts, for they are the responsible go-between where the administration and the natives come in contest. Under the Begg, where necessary, come the tribal head-men, such as the ming-bashis (heads of thousands), yuz-bashis (heads of hundreds), and on-bashis (heads of tens).

In addition to the civil officials, there are also military commandants of grades according to the size of the garrison they command. Unlike those who serve in China proper, who are rarely allowed to remain more than three years in one place, both civil and military officials have usually served most of their time in Chinese Turkestan. The civil magistrates appear to be drawn from no particular part of China. During the course of our journey throughout the southern portion of the dominion we met men who by birth came from Honan, Hunan, and Hupeh.

Of intercourse, other than what is absolutely necessary, between Chinese and native officials we found no trace. The former look with undisguised contempt upon the latter, whom they invariably refer to contemptuously as Chan-Tou—turban-headed. The manner assumed by an Amban in speaking to his native *entourage* would, if used by an Englishman to a native in India, be described at least as ‘unconciliatory’—by the native press probably in far stronger terms. The Ambans either did not, or pretended not to, understand a word of Turki. Considering that many of them had spent the greater portion of their lives in the dominion, this can only be attributed to a wilful desire to keep aloof from all intercourse with the subject race. Judged by our own method of treating Asiatics, this must tend to weaken the central authority by preventing mutual understanding. It is, however, open to argument whether such a method is not more suited to subject Eastern races not highly developed. There would seem to be occasions in our own dealings with Asiatics when we are prone to sacrifice the authority while drawing no nearer to the mutual understanding. One curious point in the Chinese administration of Eastern Turkestan is in the financial arrangements, which provide, in a far-off dependency, a regular monetary system, with coinage complete, while withholding any such system from China itself. The question of currency in the latter country has long been calculated to drive the would-be reformer to despair.

It is unnecessary here to do more than remind you that in the interior of China to-day there is no current coinage. The medium of all barter is the tael—a weight of silver, not a coin. For the masses, copper cash of various degrees of debasement are coined by provincial mints. These circulate within confined limits all over

China, but for trade purposes and for travellers lumps of solid silver are still necessary.

In Chinese Turkestan, on the contrary, the system is, comparatively speaking, modern, though not simple. They have there a common coin answering to the dollar of the China coast. This coin is the miskal, which circulates in one, two, or three miskal pieces. These have the appearance of a clumsily made florin. Ten miskal are equal to about three shillings. Other monetary terms are used, though there are no equivalent coins such as the pung (equal to five copper Chinese cash) and the tengeh (eight of which go to one sār), which latter is also worth about three shillings. Copper cash of Chinese pattern (ta-chien, or man-chien as they are called) and yamba (large silver shoes worth about £7 10s.) also circulate—the former among the poorer natives, the latter only among the wealthy merchants.

It is no easy matter to state definitely the system of taxation in any Eastern country, especially where Chinese administration is in force. But the basis of the one in use in Chinese Turkestan is that of a capitation tax, with certain tithes upon produce.

I regret being unable to state the amount of the capitation tax with absolute exactitude, but such information as could be obtained shows that it is levied in sums varying from fivepence to elevenpence per male head only. With regard to the tithes, the following lump sums were given me as specimen payment, and may be of interest although not tabulated.

At Polu, a well-to-do village situated on the northern slopes of the Kuen Lun mountains, 2,000 tengeh (about £37) is paid per annum as a tax to the Chinese Amban at Kiria. At Cherchen, the fairly rich oasis already alluded to, 8,000 tengeh (about £150) is the annual land

tax chargeable to the revenue. In addition to this sum, an amount equal to 4,000 tangeh (£75) is paid by the shepherds and nomads of the surrounding district. As if this were not enough, incredible as it may sound, the townspeople are subjected to still another tax. I was assured by various sellers in the bazaar—though under solemn pledge of secrecy, for breaking which I ask their pardon—that the Amban took for his own ‘squeeze’ two tangeh out of every ten tangeh worth of goods sold on market days in the bazaar. As this sum roughly represents ninepence out of every four shillings, it is apparent that even an Amban must live, and that right well.

The military organization of Chinese Turkestan is rather worse than that of most parts of China in the present day. Putting on one side the new foreign-drilled army nursed by the well-known Viceroy Yuan Shih Kai, in the vicinity of the capital, the remainder of the imperial forces scattered throughout the various provinces are still quite ineffective, that is, should they be called upon to meet European troops.

In spite of what has been lately heard of the high pitch to which Yuan Shih Kai's troops have been trained, I have no hesitation in saying that even they, unless officered by or mixed with Japanese troops, would make a poor show against good European soldiers.

From Kiria in Chinese Turkestan to Tai Yuan Fu in Shansi province, 250 miles from Peking, altogether a distance of some 2,000 miles, including such towns as Su-Chou, Kanchou, Liangchou, and Lanchou, no soldiers were seen either in numbers, quality, or armament, that a single foreign brigade with field artillery could not account for. In Turkestan, such garrisons as there are occupy either small forts in the vicinity of the town, or

the towns themselves. The latter are usually built on the lines of a Chinese city with, in some cases, the addition of a surrounding moat. The garrisons vary in nominal number, from the 3,000 at Urumtsi to a few score at such places as Toksu, Koria, and the frontier post of Tashkurgan towards the Pamirs. In *actual* numbers they vary still more. At Kiria the Amban himself informed me that the garrison consisted of one liang of infantry, 500 men, and some ma-ping, cavalry. No discourtesy to him is intended when I say that, after being there three days, I do not think there were fifty men all told.

At Chakalik the same story was again repeated. Putting the actual number of Chinese troops garrisoning Eastern Turkestan at 8,000, it may be safely inferred that barely 5,000 would be found present in an emergency. And of those 5,000 a medical inspection upon European lines would suffice to case 50 per cent. for old age, opium-smoking, and other causes. Were Chinese official statements as to the number of troops present accepted as facts, no doubt the garrison would be put at 15,000 or 20,000 well-armed men. The troops who form the garrisons are drawn chiefly from the provinces of Hunan and Hupeh. Spending, as they do, years in one place, the men eventually deteriorate even more than their provincial brethren-in-arms in China proper. Of local Turki troops there are none, nor would they make soldiers under Chinese instruction.

The internal political relations of Chinese Turkestan are probably in as close touch with Peking as are those in such provinces as the Kwangtung, Yungn, or Sze-Shuan. During the course of our journey a considerable number of officials were met with in the great north-west road which traverses Kansu province. These were either

proceeding to or returning from Urumtsi. The telegraph line from Peking to Kashgar is the one outward sign of imperial interest which Eastern Turkestan enjoys. It is kept in repair, well staffed, and in good working order. In addition to the telegraph, the imperial courier post still survives. By it the transfer of information or special orders is extraordinarily rapid. An imperial despatch wrapped in the well-known yellow silk and tied round the waist of a succession of mounted couriers will reach Liangchou, in Kansu province, under nineteen days from Peking. The time usually taken for the same journey by well-equipped travellers is forty-three days.

The external political relations of the dependency are confined, of geographical necessity, to two foreign powers. From the situation of Chinese Turkestan this will, in all probability, always be the case. Of the two powers, it should be apparent, even to Celestial obtuseness, that from Russia there is everything to fear, from England nothing. Yet the closest scrutiny is necessary before any sign can be observed that this fact is realized. Before proceeding to discuss the present position of these two powers in the area under notice, it may not be amiss to glance for a moment at their importance as apparent to natives on the spot.

The visible authority of Russia is for ever held prominently before the eyes of the inhabitants, both in the position occupied by the Consul-General at Kashgar, and by that of his colleague at Urumtsi. The very real local power exercised by these two officials is made to appeal to Asiatic notions of authority in its most practical form when required—viz., that of force. On the other hand, the position occupied by the British representative at Kashgar is looked upon by those who are accustomed to compare such details, where they never cease to be dis-

cussed, as inferior in every way. There may possibly be sufficient reasons for the continuation of this state of affairs, but they are not apparent to the man on the spot. However good they may seem to be at a distance, few who have travelled in Chinese Turkestan, or who possess even an elementary acquaintance with Asiatic methods of thought, will agree with them.

Though no direct reference has hitherto been made to the neglect on the part of China to safeguard her most distant colony, the fact cannot be overlooked in any allusions to Chinese Turkestan.

There are two reasons which suggest themselves for the apparent apathy of the Imperial Government. The first is, that it is aware of the hopeless nature of the task should it endeavour to take the necessary precautions; the second, and probably the true one, that it is too apathetic, and having been accustomed for so long a period to trust to the forbearance of its neighbours, will not now arouse itself. It may also be that the retrocession of the Ili province in 1882, after its temporary occupation by Russian troops, may have helped to lull Chinese suspicions. Be the reason what it may, there is no slight chance that the future will bring forth a rude awakening. It is acknowledged that Russia holds Chinese Turkestan in the hollow of her hand, and, with no intention whatever to suggest immediate or even likely action on the part of those who guide the Asiatic policy of that nation, it may be of interest to indicate future possibilities.

In the event of such action being taken as the absorption of Chinese Turkestan, it is probable that Russia might be content merely to overawe at first Kashgaria and Ili. The former territory was still considered as belonging to the Kokhandian Khanate after the Russian

conquest of Kokhand in 1864. The Mohamedans there did, in fact, pay tribute amounting to some thousands of pounds a year, and such a gradual advance would be more in keeping with traditional Russian policy. The aim of those answerable for that policy has always been to secure as far as possible the toleration of the Mohamedan element in previous Central Asian conquests, for, as they are well aware, in the feelings entertained for Russia by the faithful, lies one of the chief dangers of Russian expansion in Asia. It is difficult to say if we ourselves suffer in less degree from the same feeling at the hands of Mussulmans. It is usual to suggest that we do, partly on account of the well-known toleration shown for the religious feelings of all our subject Asiatic races, more, perhaps, on account of the facilities provided under government auspices for the millions of devotees who make the pilgrimage to Mecca from our Eastern possessions.

Indiscussing the political relations of Chinese Turkestan, it is unavoidable not to include in any such review those of the neighbouring territories which border that country. The future of Tibet is another eventuality which cannot but affect the political relations of Chinese Turkestan with whoever is the dominant power of Lhasa.

Although at the present moment China is once more acknowledged to be in full possession of her authority at the capital, it is impossible to say how long it may be before fresh schemes for upsetting that authority may not be set on foot. Last time the efforts of Dorjief, the Buriat, were sufficiently near to being successful to give cause to ponder what the sequence might have been had an open adoption of the wishes of the Dalai Lama been forced upon the Tibetan Council. It does not require much prescience to suggest that the triumph of the pro-

Russian party in Tibet would probably have been followed at no remote date by the proclamation of a Russian protectorate over Chinese Turkestan. In whatever form Russian interests were expressed, the results would have been most serious to ourselves, even though no open attempt was made to enter Tibet. In drawing attention this afternoon to some of the more interesting questions connected with the future of the area under discussion, no attempt is made to suggest novelty. None of the questions are new, all have been possibilities ever since Kokhand was absorbed by Russia over thirty years ago, but there has been a perhaps unconscious neglect of Chinese Turkestan as a factor in Central Asian politics. Events which have happened during the last few years in the Far East have recast most of the political problems which they affect, and it behoves those interested to reconsider their own judgment and opinion in the light of the entirely new perspective through which these problems must be viewed.

There is one point which cannot be too strongly insisted upon when one remembers very recent events both in Manchuria and Tibet, and that is, the danger of reckoning upon either the intention or ability of the present Chinese Government to carry out its undertakings.

Recent utterances, both in the press and verbally to Imperial Chinese edicts, are calculated to inspire confidence that at last the Golden Age has come, and that China has arrived at the point when she may be left alone to safeguard her own and foreign interests both at home and abroad.

Nothing could be more opposed to facts, and unless due precautions are taken to safeguard the interests of individual nations, instead of trusting to Chinese

authority to do so, we, for one, may find ourselves severely handicapped when the occasion for action suddenly arises.

In conclusion, I would like to lay before you two points of view bearing, though indirectly, on the future of Chinese Turkestan. Concerning neither will I offer my opinion ; at the same time, both are worthy of earnest consideration.

Now the first point of view. There are to-day distinct signs that a more hopeful era is about to dawn in Asia, heralded, perhaps, by an Anglo-Russian *entente*. Few political movements would be more welcome to those interested in the East, but we may not forget that international agreements, though a sign of mutual goodwill, are not binding for all time. And now for the head point of view.

In defending the increased military expenditure in India as late as March, 1906, the present Viceroy made the following remarks in answer to protests by a member of his Council against any increased expenditure. This member was a well-known native gentleman. 'I am afraid,' said the Viceroy, 'that I cannot follow the hon. member in his conclusion that these dangers—our Asiatic differences with Russia and the dismemberment of China—have disappeared for ever. He has told me that the tide of European aggression in China has been rolled back for good, that the power of Russia has been broken, and that her prestige in Asia has gone.

'I am afraid these are mere assumptions, which I can hardly accept. I am afraid I feel more impelled to consider what effect the Russian reverses may have on the pride of a high-spirited race, and I wonder in how long or how short a time she may feel confident of recovering her lost prestige.'

DISCUSSION

GENERAL SIR THOMAS HOLDICH said: In listening to this very interesting paper, one cannot but be struck by the great variety of points which Major Bruce has opened up for discussion—too many, almost, to be dealt with on a single afternoon. I am not quite sure from his paper what his estimate of the capabilities of the Chinese soldier may really be. I do not think there is any question affecting Eastern military power which has had such variety of opinions expressed about it as this. So far as history can enlighten us, the Chinese soldier has certainly distinguished himself in a very remarkable way. It is not so very long ago that in this room I had an opportunity of calling your attention to the fact that at one time a Chinese army of invasion passed from China into Tibet, and after encountering almost incredible obstacles in the way of high mountain passes, every one of them higher than Mont Blanc, they finally met and defeated a large Gurka force sent against them, and they left such a record of uprisal behind them that the lesson is not forgotten in Nepal to this day. That was a remarkable performance; indeed, I do not know any in history, not even Napoleon's crossing the Alps or San Martin's crossing of the Andes in South America, so remarkable from the point of view of the physical obstacles overcome. That the Chinese can fight under certain conditions there can be no doubt whatever, and they have succeeded in impressing this fact on the populations of Chinese Turkestan and of Tibet. For, as Major Bruce has explained to us, the amount of force at the disposal of the authorities of Turkestan is extremely small—much smaller than the officials admit. A mere handful of soldiers—not more, perhaps, than 4,000—has always succeeded in maintaining Chinese authority over that

huge area. We have never heard of any serious difficulties encountered in this task. This is a good deal owing, no doubt, to the system of administration which the Chinese maintain. They leave the people almost entirely to themselves in local administration, merely exercising control in matters which we should describe as Imperial.

There must be remarkable power in a people which has succeeded in impressing itself and leaving its mark over such a huge extent of country as the Chinese dependencies ; and I think that in the problems likely to arise in the future relative to supremacy in the East, China is a factor which cannot possibly be left out of account. What the effect of the Japanese influence may be upon China we cannot possibly tell ; but of this I feel quite sure, that the recent war between Russia and Japan and its results constitute a distinct challenge to the West. It is a recurrence of an old historic challenge. Whatever way we choose to look at it, the glove has again been thrown down. I cannot help thinking that in the future it will really not be so much a question, as in the past, of Western nations fighting for European supremacy on Asiatic fields, but of Asiatics fighting for supremacy on their own fields. At present we hold the position of directors of military strategy in the East. We have a fine army in India composed of men of all shades of Eastern religious opinion, and I believe that army to be thoroughly loyal and devoted. It is entirely under English leading, and you may say that it is only under such leading, that the strength of that force can be maintained and developed. But will this state of things last ? We have seen an Asiatic force directed by Asiatic minds prevailing in a most remarkable way against another Asiatic force—for we cannot call the Russian forces anything else than Asiatic—directed by European minds. So that we have now to consider, not so much what lies between ourselves and Russia as another European nation, but what lies before the two nations combined in balancing the Great Powers of the East.

This leads up to what I am convinced is coming—an Anglo-Russian agreement, probably founded on some sound commercial basis which shall be of equal advantage to both countries. This will mark a new political position in the East ; and, looking beyond that, again, I think we shall find in years to come that such an agreement will become a political necessity.

I have heard more than once the opinion to which Major

Bruce has given expression as to the general weakness of our representation in Chinese Turkestan. Mr. Macartney, our agent there, whom I know very well, ranks simply as an assistant to our Resident in Kashmir, which is not a very prominent position to hold. (DR. COTTERELL TUPP: He is made consul now.) If that is so, it is a distinct step in advance. But I was impressed, during the period I was on the borders of Chinese Turkestan during the delimitation of the Pamir Boundary, with the deference always accorded to Russian authority in Chinese Turkestan. If the problem is to be regarded as a military one, we cannot forget that the *whole* of Turkestan, Afghan as well as Chinese, is, in Major Bruce's phrase, in the hollow of Russia's hand. Under such conditions it is not likely that we shall succeed in altering native views on the subject of the relative importance of Russia and England, except by such a strong military demonstration as is beyond the intention, if not, indeed, the power, of the Government of India to make in such remote countries. As I said before, there are so many questions, all more or less speculative, arising out of an examination of the political status of Chinese Turkestan that it will be interesting to hear the views of others who may have a better acquaintance with the subject than myself.

COLONEL E. ST. C. PEMBERTON, R.E., said: It is fifteen years since I was in Chinese Turkestan, and I do not, therefore, feel qualified to express an opinion in regard to present-day conditions there; but there is a point of some interest which has been referred to incidentally by the lecturer, the possibility of Russian colonization in Central Asia.

Now, the Russian advance into Central Asia, as is known, was in earlier times by way of Western Siberia, their border being gradually pushed southwards from Omsk to the line of the Irtysh, on which river a frontier post came into existence, which by degrees grew into the Russian town of Semipalatinsk. This was for many years the southern limit of Russian dominion in this direction, and I have on more than one occasion heard Russians express regret at the circumstance that climatic conditions seem to preclude European settlement of the regions situated to the south of the Irtysh.

Of course, one knows there are European children in Russian Turkestan, and it is probable that those who live in the elevated regions in Semirechensk and Ferghana thrive well. All the

same, Russian colonization on any extended scale in Russian Central Asia would seem to be unlikely owing to climatic conditions. And in regard to Chinese Turkestan, I think we are all agreed that in the event of its conquest by Russia, it could not become an integral portion of the Empire in the sense of being peopled by the Russians themselves.

Major Bruce has referred to the small number of Chinese troops in Turkestan, a circumstance which I, too, noticed when travelling through in 1892. Their military weakness in the Western portion of their Empire is, indeed, a matter of history. As is well known, they failed utterly in 1865 to cope with the rebellion of the Tarantchis and the Dungans in the province of Kuldja, which was occupied by the Russians in consequence, and held by them for twelve years. And did not Yakub Beg turn them out of Kashgar, defying during his lifetime their efforts to reconquer it?

Whether in the future the Chinese will be able to strengthen their position in the West of their Empire must depend upon the degree to which they as a people become regenerated in spirit. If there is real regeneration, the morals of their soldiers will be much higher than it is to-day, and organization, training, discipline will follow.

But even granting this, one must remember how poor are the lines of communication between the heart of the Chinese Empire and its distant Western provinces, traversing, as they do, vast sands, deserts without railways or waterways. Certainly it is true that at the present time no power confronting Russia in these parts in support of China could look to receive effective military support from the Chinese.

MR. DAVID FRASER: Having recently been in Chinese Turkestan, I can bear out what Major Bruce has said as to the small number of Chinese troops and officials who hold this large country in subjection. This is one of the most noticeable things in travelling through the country, and Sir Thomas Holdich has also rightly referred to this feature in relation to Tibet. A Russian traveller has stated that there are two divisions of Chinese troops in Turkestan stationed at various places. So far from there being 20,000 men, however, I believe there are not more than 2,000, spread over some twenty different detachments. At Kotan, according to this Russian writer, there should be 300 infantry and 200 cavalry. I called on the Chinese military

Amban there, who holds rank equivalent to that of general. He kindly asked me to breakfast and to a review of his troops. On the parade-ground, instead of 500 men, there were not more than fifty, and I am quite sure a good number of these had been scraped out of the bazaar for the occasion (Laughter). There were five officers, and when I wanted to photograph the force, the only way in which they were capable of parading the men for the purpose was in two lines facing each other. In order to take the photograph I had to instruct them where and how to stand (Laughter). I was interested to hear from the general that he had recently received a large consignment of Mauser rifles for the re-armament of his men. I imagined that this was in accordance with the recent decision to arm the Chinese forces throughout with a new Mauser rifle of very small bore, so I asked to see the new rifles, and on their being brought out for my inspection, I found I could get my thumb down the barrel of any one of them, which does not say much for their value.

Major Bruce has discussed the possibility of Russia making an extension of her borders into Chinese Turkestan. Well, after seeing the country and its defenceless state, I cannot but agree that whenever Russia chooses to make an advance in that direction the Chinese will be powerless to stop her. But there is, in my opinion, a reason which will operate to prevent a move of this kind on Russia's part, and that is the small economic value of the country. Its area is very immense, and the only populated parts are those where cultivation is possible. Cultivation is confined to a series of oases lying at the foot of the mountainous regions which Major Bruce has described as bounding the country. These cultivated areas seem to me to be of such small dimensions and their productive capacity so limited, that I do not believe they are worth annexing in view of the small margin of surplus commodity available for export. From an economic point of view, then, it is hardly probable that Russia covets possession of Chinese Turkestan. If she ever does advance in this direction it will be for strategic reasons, though it is difficult to see how it would profit her to approach more closely to the Tibetan and Kashmir borders. But experience has proved to Russia how timid is the British Government in regard to operations in Central Asia, and the annexation of Kashgaria would certainly prove an excellent political weapon.

It would be interesting to know if the powers that have guaranteed the integrity of the Chinese Empire regard Eastern Turkestan as within the scope of their guarantee.

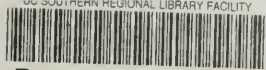
With regard to the British Agent at Kashgar, he labours under the ponderous title of 'Special Assistant to the Resident in Kashmir for Chinese Affairs.' Every time he signs his name this long sentence has to appear after it, and every time he receives a letter he has to be so designated. Not long ago he was gazetted consul, but the Chinese declined to recognize the right of the British Government to gazette a consul to any place in the Chinese dominions which is not an open port by treaty. So Mr. Macartney's position is not officially recognized, and he may be said to be in Kashgar on sufferance. But it is a remarkable thing that the influence he wields with the Chinese is probably greater than that of the Russian consul. As is well known, he is a son of the late Sir Halliday Macartney, who was one of the ablest and most faithful servants the Chinese Government ever had, and he is also a descendant of that Lord Macartney who was the first British Ambassador to the Court of Peking. Mr. Macartney has been in Kashgar for fifteen years, and he is held in the greatest respect by the Chinese. If it came to a diplomatic tussle in Kashgar, I think most people who know the position would put their money on the British agent rather than on the Russian. (Cheers.)

MR. C. BLACK: As so much has been said respecting Mr. Macartney, I should like to call attention to his views on one of the subjects mentioned by the last speaker—that of the economic value of Chinese Turkestan. These views were set forth in a valuable trade report. While not depicting the country as a rich one, Mr. Macartney considers that the opportunities of trade between us and Kashgar are worth appropriating. I remember that thirty years ago a great deal of attention was drawn to the subject of trade, and a mission to Kashgar was sent under Mr. Forsyth. A treaty followed, but with the fall of Yakub Beg the treaty fell through. I think that if the Indian Government devoted rather more attention to the subject of trade routes, and to explorations of alternative routes, it might give opportunities for increased trade, and, generally speaking, for better understanding between the two peoples.

SIR THOMAS HOLDICH: I would ask you to thank Major Bruce for his valuable paper. (Cheers.) I regret that some members

are absent to-day who might have added considerably to the interest of the discussion. Still, I think we have heard a great deal this afternoon which is of considerable interest, not only to ourselves, but also to the country at large.

MAJOR BRUCE having acknowledged the vote of thanks, the proceedings terminated.



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